

October will see the release of *MALCOLM*, from RCA/Columbia/Hoyts. This delightful Australian comedy proved to be quite a winner at the box-office – the second highest grossing Australian film for 1986, after *CROCODILE DUNDEE*. Whilst the multi-AFI Award winner surprised everyone with its success, both financially and critically, it was quite a battle to get the project off the ground in the first place, as recalled by David Parker, the film's co-producer, scriptwriter, cinematographer and 'gadgets builder'.

'It wasn't easy to get the finance together', David said. 'As it was our first film and neither Nadia (Nadia Tass, David's wife and the film's director and co-writer) nor I had much experience in helming feature films, we didn't expect people to simply come forth with the money, but it proved more of an obstacle than we thought'.

The tale that David and Nadia had to mortgage their house as security for their backers is true, but even that pales into insignificance when compared to one trick David used to secure financial backing. David decided to use a novel approach on one stockbroker, Ian Johnson, who was reputed to be gifted with a strong sense of humor. David sent one of the 'bandit' ashtrays from the film into Johnson's office. The lid on the ashtray popped open, a plastic gun leapt out and a small tape recorder issued the command, 'Give us a million dollars or I'll blow your *&* @& head off!'. The gimmick worked and Johnson secured the underwriting for the project.

Another interesting tale about the film is that the central character of Malcolm, superbly played by Colin Friels, is modelled on an actual person, Nadia's brother, John. 'John, who was killed four years ago in a car accident, was an incredible person. He was so absorbed in his world of trains and trams, that he had a sense of purity in him – he hadn't been socially conditioned as we are. If he was sitting in a room of people and wanted to leave, John would just get up and leave, without saying a word. It wasn't that he was rude or such, it was just the way he viewed life – straightforward and free from our conditioning', David explained. 'Because of John, *MALCOLM* was a very special and personal project for Nadia and I. The film is basically about the underdogs in life, whether it be Malcolm, Frank or his girlfriend, Judith. Actually the characters of Malcolm and Frank have a great deal in common'.



The Man Behind Malcolm's Gadgets



*Above: John Hargreaves, Colin Friels and Ling Davis in 'Malcolm'.
Left: Nadia Tass, Colin Friels and David Parker from 'Malcolm.'*

The other stars of this enchanting comedy are Malcolm's gadgets, such as the aforementioned 'ashtray bandit', the 'split' get-away car and Malcolm's personal mini-tram, all which were devised and built by David. 'The gadgets and devices were great fun to make, but I had to be careful not to place too much emphasis on them – they had to appear that Malcolm made them and not some sophisticated special effects workshop. I could imagine how the effects would have been if *MALCOLM* was an American film – they would have dominated the story', David said.

David and Nadia are busily working on their next project, *RIKKI & PETE*, which like *MALCOLM*, involved considerable drama in raising the finance, despite the success of their first venture. Both David and Nadia are deeply committed to their projects, something which is very evident in *MALCOLM*. 'It's hard to maintain standards, especially when our first film was such a success, but we trust our judgement and believe in our projects – to me, that's the most important thing – to believe in what you're doing', David concluded.